

REMARKS

Claims 1-15 remain pending in the application. Claims 1, 7 and 9 have been amended. Reconsideration of the rejection and allowance of the pending application in view of the following remarks are respectfully requested.

In the Final Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-15 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Takai et al. (U.S. Patent Publication 2002/0029096). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection for at least the following reasons.

Applicants' specification discloses a central control system that controls multiple air conditioners. The central control system includes, inter alia, a central controller connected to the multiple air conditioners through a dedicated line, for transmitting and receiving signals based on an air conditioner communication protocol. The central controller is connected to an external Internet network for transmitting and receiving signals based on an Ethernet communication protocol. The central control system also includes a protocol converter that is physically separate from the central controller, and that converts signals between the Ethernet communication protocol and the air conditioner communication protocol.

Takai et al. relates to an air conditioner management system. The system includes, inter alia, a personal computer 100, and a converter unit 200. See Figure 1 and paragraph 0025. The personal computer 100 is connected to the converter unit 200 via a universal serial bus (USB) 400. See Figure 1 and paragraph 0028. The personal computer 100 includes a software engine 120 and a device driver 130 for data transfer to and from the converter unit 200 by

USB. See Figure 1 and paragraph 0029. Takai also discloses that the personal computer 100 may include a Web browser that transfers data to a Web server monitor center 702. See paragraph 0049.

In the Office Action, the Examiner asserts that Takai's personal computer 100 corresponds to Applicants' claimed central controller. See page 2 of the Office Action. The Examiner also asserts that the combination of Takai's engine 120, device driver 130, Web browser, and converter unit 200 correspond to Applicant's claimed protocol converter.

Applicants respectfully submit that Takai's engine 120, device driver 130, and Web browser are all internal components of the personal computer 100, and thus, are not physically separate from the personal computer 100, as recited in Applicants' claims 1, 7 and 9.

Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that Takai fails to at least disclose or suggest a central control system which includes a protocol converter, physically separate from a central controller, that converts signals between an Ethernet communication protocol and an air conditioner communication protocol, as recited in independent claim 1.

Applicants respectfully submit that Takai also fails to at least disclose or suggest a method of operating a central control system which includes transmitting, by a central controller, a control command to a protocol converter, physically separate from the central controller, using an Ethernet communication protocol, as recited in independent claim 7.

Applicants respectfully submit that Takai also fails to at least disclose or suggest a central control system which includes a protocol converter connected to and physically separated from the central controller to convert signals between an Ethernet communication protocol and an air conditioner communication protocol, as recited in independent claim 9.

For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that the 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) rejection of independent claims 1, 7 and 9 is improper, and request withdrawal of these grounds of rejection.

Dependent claims 2-6, 8 and 10-15 are also submitted to be in condition for allowance for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to independent claims 1, 7 and 9.

In the Office Action, the Examiner also rejected claims 1-3, 5, 7-11, 13 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Meyer (U.S. Patent No. 6,157,943). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection for at least the following reasons.

Meyer is directed to a facilities management system 10 which can be supervised from a secondary workstation 33. See col. 4, lines 7-17. The secondary workstation 33 includes a Web server program 52 that handles the exchange of information over the Internet via TCP/IP, and a OLE 55 coupled to the Web server program 52 which has software interfaces based on a process control industry standard. See Figure 3 and col. 4, lines 19-39.

In the Office Action, the Examiner asserts that Meyer's secondary workstation 33 corresponds to Applicants' claimed central controller. See pages

5 and 10 of the Office Action. The Examiner also asserts that Meyer's Web server program 52 corresponds to Applicants' claimed protocol converter. See pages 5 and 10 of the Office Action.

Applicants respectfully submit that Meyer's Web server program 52 is a software component internal to the secondary workstation 33, and thus, is not physically separate from the secondary workstation 33, as recited in Applicants' claims 1, 7 and 9.

Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that Meyer fails to at least disclose or suggest a central control system which includes a protocol converter, physically separate from a central controller, that converts signals between an Ethernet communication protocol and an air conditioner communication protocol, as recited in independent claim 1.

Applicants respectfully submit that Meyer also fails to at least disclose or suggest a method of operating a central control system which includes transmitting, by a central controller, a control command to a protocol converter, physically separate from the central controller, using an Ethernet communication protocol, as recited in independent claim 7.

Applicants respectfully submit that Meyer also fails to at least disclose or suggest a central control system which includes a protocol converter connected to and physically separated from the central controller to convert signals between an Ethernet communication protocol and an air conditioner communication protocol, as recited in independent claim 9.

For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that the 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) rejection of independent claims 1, 7 and 9 is improper, and request withdrawal of this ground of rejection.

Dependent claims 2, 3, 5, 8, 10, 11, 13 and 15 are also submitted to be in condition for allowance for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to independent claims 1, 7 and 9.

In the Office Action, the Examiner also rejected claims 7 and 8 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Masui et al. (U.S. Patent Publication 2003/0140637). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection for at least the following reasons.

Masui et al. is directed to an air conditioner control system that includes a central remote controller 5. See Figure 1 and paragraph 0134. The central remote controller 5 includes a transmission means 6 connected to an outdoor unit 1 and indoor units 2. See Figure 1 and paragraph 0134.

In the Office Action, the Examiner asserts that Masui's central remote controller 5 corresponds to Applicants' claimed central controller. See page 7 of the Office Action. The Examiner also asserts that Masui's transmission means 6 corresponds to Applicant's claimed protocol converter.

Applicants respectfully submit that Masui's transmission means 6 is an internal component of the central remote controller 5, and thus, is not physically separate from the central remote controller 5, as recited in Applicants' claim 7.

Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that Masui fails to at least disclose or suggest a method of operating a central control system which includes

transmitting, by a central controller, a control command to a protocol converter, physically separate from the central controller, using an Ethernet communication protocol, as recited in independent claim 7.

For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that the 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) rejection of independent claim 7 is improper, and request withdrawal of this ground of rejection.

Dependent claim 8 is also submitted to be in condition for allowance for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to independent claim 7.

The Examiner rejected claim 4 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Meyer in view of Nakamura et al. (U.S. Patent Publication 2003/0033392). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection for at least the following reasons.

As discussed above, Meyer fails to at least disclose or suggest a central control system which includes a protocol converter that is physically separate from a central controller, and that converts signals between an Ethernet communication protocol and an air conditioner communication protocol, as recited in independent claim 1.

Applicants submit that Nakamura et al. fails to disclose that which is lacking in Meyer. Specifically, Applicants submit that Nakamura et al., which relates to an air conditioner and a control software updating system, also fails to disclose or suggest a central control system which includes a protocol converter, physically separate from a central controller, that converts signals between an Ethernet communication protocol and an air conditioner communication protocol.

Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that the combination of Meyer and Nakamura et al., as asserted by the Examiner, fails to at least disclose or suggest a central control system which includes a protocol converter, physically separate from a central controller, that converts signals between an Ethernet communication protocol and an air conditioner communication protocol.

For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that the invention of claim 4 is not obvious over the prior art combination set forth by the Examiner, and thus request that the Examiner withdraw the 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) rejection of claim 4 as being obvious over Meyer in view of Nakamura et al.

Based on the above, it is respectfully submitted that this application is now in condition for allowance, and a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Reconsideration of the outstanding Final Office Action, and allowance of the present application and all of the claims therein are respectfully requested and now believed to be appropriate. Applicants have made a sincere effort to place the present invention in condition for allowance and believe that they have now done so.

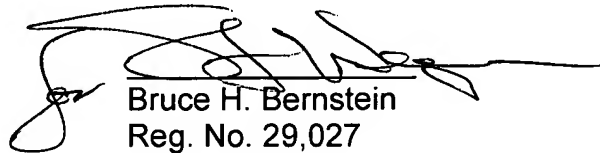
Any amendment to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should an extension of time be necessary to maintain the pendency of this

application, including any extensions of time required to place the application in condition for allowance by an Examiner's Amendment, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fee to Deposit Account No. 19-0089.

Should the Examiner have any questions or comments regarding this response, or the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully Submitted,
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